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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNR #4402/01 3111333  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 071333Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3371  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 9661  
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 5570  
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 4909  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2372  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 1635  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2457  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2381  
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SUBJECT: KENYA ELECTIONS: COAST RUNNING 60/40  
PRO-OPPOSITION SO FAR

REF: NAIROBI 4269

11. (SBU) Summary: PolCouns' travels in Coast Province indicate that the coastal strip is strongly pro-Raila Odinga and his Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). The interior of the province is much less committed, with the President's Party of National Unity (PNU) coalition better represented. The Coast accounts for about five percent of projected voters (registered voters multiplied by traditional turnout rate). Ethnic Kambas have significant communities in Mombasa, Kwale and Taita/Taveta districts. They back ODM-Kenya presidential candidate Kalonzo Musyoka. While the electorate remains volatile, 60 percent pro-opposition support (ODM & ODM-K) to 40 percent pro-government support is a good estimate for Coast Province at this point. End Summary.

Mombasa: Cosmopolitan Coast Capital Favors ODM  
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12. (SBU) Cosmopolitan Mombasa has significant support for both opposition parties (Raila Odinga's ODM & Kalonzo Musyoka's ODM-K) as well as President Kibaki's PNU coalition. The majority of residents appear to support ODM, largely due to the coast's traditional attachment to the idea of decentralization, which ODM supports and PNU opposes.

13. (SBU) A major component of PNU on the coast is the Shirikisho party, which, unusual for a Kenyan political party, has a strong policy orientation. Shirikisho was founded to promote the "majimbo" concept of decentralized governance (reftel). Kibaki and his PNU are outspokenly anti-majimbo, causing severe discomfit for their Shirikisho allies. Shirikisho leaders are having difficulty maintaining the support of rank and file members, who accuse their leaders of selling out Shirikisho principles. Kibaki's Minister of State for National Heritage, Suleiman Shakombo, a Shirikisho leader, confessed to PolCouns that his reelection to parliament from his Mombasa constituency was in doubt due to his unpopular alliance with Kibaki and the PNU.

14. (SBU) Shakombo insisted, "Raila's and Kalonzo's talk about 'majimbo' is not serious. We can convince Kibaki to give the coast what is owed to us. Raila will take our votes and then forget us." Shakombo listed the coast's grievances in much the same terms as do ODM-supporters: "Mombasa is the

country's second greatest source of tax revenue after Nairobi. But very little of that money comes back to us. Where are our roads and other infrastructure? Tourists will stop coming and spending here if the coast gets more and more run down. Nairobi is starving the cow that produces milk for the whole country." On the controversial land issue, a highly emotive subject on the coastal strip, Shakombo again sounded much like ODM-supporters on the coast: "We will peacefully accept what occurred in the past, all the land stolen from us by Kenyatta and Moi. But now we need a new deal. Why shouldn't coastal people own beach property? It is not right that all our prime land is in the hands of upcountry people." (Note: 'Upcountry people' is standard coast code for Kenyans from the interior, especially Kikuyus. End Note.)

15. (SBU) An ethnic Mijikenda ODM-supporter in Mombasa frankly expressed anti-Luo sentiments, despite his backing of ethnic-Luo Raila Odinga, the ODM Presidential candidate. "In 2002 we used Kibaki and his Kikuyus to tame Moi and his Kalenjins when they stayed too long and grabbed too much. This year we will use Raila and his Luos to tame Kibaki and his Kikuyus for grabbing too much and treating everyone else with disrespect. The Luos are not civilized like we coastals, but they can help us get what we want." (Note: The largest ethnic group on the coast are the Mijikenda, a group of nine Bantu communities. They tend to share the widespread Bantu distaste for Nilotic (especially Luo) cultural practices and traditions. End Note.)

16. (SBU) PolCouns did not detect a Christian/Muslim divide in Mombasa political sympathies. Coast province is evenly split between the two faiths, while Mombasa is 60/40 Muslim. Coast natives in Mombasa, whether Christian or Muslim, tend

to be pro-ODM. Kamba residents tend to be pro-ODM-K. Other 'upcountry' Mombasa residents tend to be pro-PNU (although some Luhya tourist industry workers line up behind ODM).

#### Tana River District: Preoccupied by Feuding -----

17. (SBU) The poor and remote Tana River District has not yet caught election fever. Residents are more concerned about chronic, violent ethnic strife among the agricultural (Bantu) Pokomo and the pastoralist (Cushitic) Somali, Orma and Walde peoples, and among the pastoralists themselves. Of the district's three parliamentary constituencies, two are considered lightly pro-ODM and one is considered heavily pro-PNU. In each case, this is a function of an individual leaders' political alliances rather than voter commitment to a particular party. The land and resources debate does not feature in the interior in the same manner as it does on the coastal strip. However, fierce competition over land between farmers and herders, and among herders for water and prime pasturage, is a constant for this region. These divisions may develop into rival political camps, with violent implications. In general, herders tend to support ODM and farmers tend to support PNU. However, the picture is complicated by some pastoralist leaders' traditional adherence to KANU, which is now a PNU affiliate. The concept of the PNU coalition is not well understood in the area. Orma herders loyal to a KANU politician expressed puzzlement to PolCouns about how they could be on the same side as Pokomo farmers.

#### North Coast: "Whose Side Are We On? We Have No Idea!" -----

18. (SBU) Political discussions in the Giriama country (one of the larger Mijikenda groups, predominately Christian and/or traditional) revealed a great deal of confusion. This coastal area to the North of Malindi is a hotbed of pro-majimbo (decentralization) sympathies. A meeting with the local PNU coordinator in Magarini included bitter remarks about "exploitation by upcountry people," and confusion about her Shirikisho party's participation in the PNU coalition. "We read in the papers that the President is against majimbo,

but our leaders tell us he is really for it and we should do as they say. We do not understand. But Raila will have a rally here next week and he will explain all to us." Again, this expression of longing for the advent of opposition leader Raila Odinga was coming from the local coordinator of the President's coalition party. PNU has a lot of work to do on the north coast reconciling its anti-majimbo position with the pro-majimbo sympathies of the members of its local coalition partner, Shirikisho. In fact, the second strata of Shirikisho leaders recently announced to the press that Shirikisho was pulling out of PNU, only to have their leaders denounce them and insist on adherence to PNU, inspiring much grumbling from the membership.

#### On The Road to Voi: Voter Card Buying Operation

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¶9. (SBU) At a gasoline station in the town of Mariakani, about an hour drive northwest of Mombasa, PolCouns witnessed individuals casually buying up voter cards from this pro-ODM area. Mariakani is situated on the border of Kwale (south coast) and Kilifi (north coast) districts. When asked about the gentlemen with the clipboards and satchels sitting at an outside table in the snack bar receiving a stream of visitors, a pump attendant explained that they were buying voter identification cards from agents that were transacting business in the rural areas of the two districts. While at the station, PolCouns witnessed envelopes exchange hands. The attendant explained that the agents go to remote rural areas and explain that the government was paying a reward for those citizens who had showed civic virtue by registering to vote. They then asked for the cards as a receipt for the money paid, telling the would-be voters: "your name is already on the voter rolls and you have your national identification card, so you do not need the voter identification card." In fact, both cards must be presented

on the day of the vote. This tactic removes from play voters thought likely to support the other side. The attendant identified the individuals transacting this business as local Government of Kenya officials and PNU activists.

#### Taita/Taveta: Personalities Rule, Not Issues

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¶10. (SBU) The Taita/Taveta region of Coast Province is traditionally considered more in tune with upcountry politics than coast politics. The area includes the Tsavo wildlife parks and huge sisal plantations. The Taita and Taveta peoples are found in both Tanzania and Kenya. Many Kambas from neighboring Eastern Province have moved into the area, along with the usual Kikuyu shopkeepers and professionals.

¶11. (SBU) The ODM office in Voi was staffed by a professional cadre of political operators drawn from the area. They spoke eloquently of ODM campaign themes and alleged that the local administration tilted strongly in favor of PNU. (Throughout his Coast travels, PolCouns found District Commissioners and District Officers consistently away from the office, "monitoring political events." This was not the case in past trips.) When PolCouns asked about ODM supporters making dangerously inflammatory statements castigating the Kikuyu, the ODM coordinator said they had just disciplined one of their parliamentary aspirants for using abusive language in that regard, "since that sort of thing is forbidden in the campaign book." On inspection, "the campaign book" turned out to be a campaign manual printed by the African National Congress for use in South Africa. The ODM coordinator averred that the ANC manual was used throughout Kenya by ODM activists.

¶12. (SBU) ODM-K did not have an office in Voi. The ODM-K coordinator worked out of his internet cafe. ODM-K activists also alleged pro-PNU bias by the local administration, but emphasized that "these days people don't do whatever the district officer or chief tells them to do. Under the British, Kenyatta and Moi, people were terrified of district officials. They had the power of life and death. These days

they don't have so much authority. Some of the chiefs speak in favor of PNU in the presence of the district officer and then, once he leaves, tell their people to vote for the opposition."

¶13. (SBU) PNU's Voi operation was in a shambles: no PNU office and the constituent members of the PNU coalition were opposed to one other. The PNU district coordinator had just quit over a dispute with Nairobi PNU officials on the disappearance of campaign funds slated for the district. An ally of the former PNU coordinator told us that the Nairobi PNU officials delivering funds to the district campaign committee "claimed to have 'consumed' 200,000 Kenyan Shillings staying in a hotel for one night. The hotel charges 1,200 shillings a night for a room! How is that possible to spend so much!") The PNU Youth Wing leaders (former KANU Youth) told PolCouns that they were so disgusted with the corruption of Nairobi PNU officials that they were prepared to sell their "mobilization services" to the opposition. Despite PNU disarray, PolCouns found a fair amount of support for Kibaki in Voi town, whose population includes civil servants, merchants and shopkeepers from outside the district. A number of pro-Kibaki voters in Voi expressed an intention to split their ballot: voting Kibaki for President and supporting a popular local ODM candidate for parliament.

¶14. (SBU) Outside Voi, the population of the surrounding district was focused on individual local leaders, adopting their party and presidential preferences as their own. While the majority of the population is either Taita or Taveta (the two indigenous Bantu communities), the area attracts plantation workers from throughout the country (mostly Kambas, Maasai, Luhyas and Luos). In a constituency bordering Tanzania, one knowledgeable observer predicted 80 percent support for the likely ODM candidate and 20 percent support (the Kamba vote) for the ODM-K candidate, with negligible support for the PNU incumbent.

Comment: 60/40 Pro-Opposition on Coast, But Many Can Be Swayed

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¶15. (SBU) The prevailing sentiment on the coast is pro-opposition, especially pro-ODM. However, Kibaki has a significant following in Coast Province and has activated the provincial administration to bring to bear on his behalf the carrots and sticks available to an incumbent. On the opposition side, some irresponsible elements within ODM seem prepared to push the populist version of majimbo to the point of threatening social peace. Coast Province only accounts for about five percent of likely voters, but in an anticipated close election, it could make a difference.

¶16. (SBU) We are expressing concerns about neutrality of the administration, vote card buying and inflammatory rhetoric to the Electoral Commission Chairman, political party leaderships and relevant government officials. If not addressed, we are prepared to comment publicly on these concerns, possibly in league with other major electoral process donors.

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